



State of Connecticut

Task Force to Study Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Schools

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 3100

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Co-Chairpersons

Erin Spaulding and Michelle Embree Ku

Revised Meeting Minutes

Friday, August 12, 2016

3:00 P.M. in Room 1E of the LOB

The meeting was called to order by Michelle Embree Ku, Co-Chairperson.

The following committee members were present:

Members: Erin Spaulding, Michelle Embree Ku, Dr. James Rosen, Michael Corjulo, Salvatore Urso, Patricia Donovan on behalf of Jessica Curran, Regina Owusu, Susan Alston on behalf of John Frassinelli

Absent were: Patricia Shoemaker

Co-Chairperson Erin Spaulding welcomed everyone to the meeting and Co-Chairperson Embree Ku opened up the floor for member introduction.

The task force members introduced themselves.

Ms. Embree Ku shared with the members that regarding sending a representative on their behalf that if the task force is voting on items, the chairs would prefer to have the members who were appointed to the task force in attendance.

Ms. Spaulding shared the charge of the taskforce and explained the evolution of the taskforce – SA 15-17 sec. 1, as Amended by PA 15-242 Sec. 53. The Task Force is charged to examine (1) the efficacy of the implementation, dissemination and enforcement of the guidelines for the management of students with life-threatening food allergies and glycogen storage disease, developed by the Department of Education pursuant to section 10-212c of the general statutes, (2) methods used by school districts to ensure the safety of students with life-threatening food allergies while such students are being transported to and from school, (3) the plans for the management of students with life-threatening food allergies and glycogen storage disease, implemented by local and regional boards of education pursuant to section 10-212c of the general statutes, to ensure the safety of students with life-threatening food allergies and their inclusion as fully participating members in the school community, (4) the emotional and psychosocial welfare of students with life threatening food allergies as it relates to and is influenced by such students' membership in the school community and how such students are included or excluded from participating in school events, and (5) how instances of isolation or targeting of

students with life-threatening food allergies by other students, school staff or school policy are addressed by the school or district administration.

Ms. Embree Ku reviewed the timeline of the final report, and commented that proposed legislation will have to be filed by January 1, 2017. She commented that they would like to submit the Task Force's final report by December to Education Committee and Public Health Committee.

Dr. Rosen commented that charge number 3 might have been an area already done by the original document in 2006, which was then revised in 2012, the plans for the management of students with life-threatening food allergies and glycogen storage disease, implemented by local and regional boards of education pursuant to section 10-212c of the general statutes, to ensure the safety of students with life-threatening food allergies and their inclusion as fully participating members in the school community, and the task force might be able to circumvent.

Dr. Rosen raised a question on the charges being tied to glycogen storage disease as it is a separate issue.

Mr. Corjulo responded that glycogen storage disease was added to the bill it was added to because they needed a vehicle for it. He raised a question to the Chairs as whether the task force can just stay focus food allergy aspect.

Ms. Embree Ku deferred the question to agenda item 7, Discussion of Key Obstacles / Suggested Guests & Topics, and come to a consensus on if the task force will have guest speakers on the glycogen storage disease.

Dr. Rosen asked if the task force could delete glycogen storage disease from their task.

Ms. Embree Ku responded that it cannot be deleted from legislation, but they as a task force can decide if it is not one of the more important issues to address at the time, but would like to further discuss in agenda item 7, Discussion of Key Obstacles / Suggested Guests & Topics.

Ms. Spaulding stated that the task force will be primarily focusing on food allergies and moved on agenda item 5, Discussion of Task Force Process.

Dr. Rosen commented that he believed bullet point number 1 is going be the key area to focus on, while the other items were touched upon already by guidelines. In addition, he pointed out many parents have raised the question of transportation - how do you deal with students with a food allergy on the bus.

Mr. Corjulo responded that it was his understanding that school districts were responsible for having in place a food allergy management plan. He suggested there be a term for this type of plan and the plan should be posted on the district's website. In addition, he clarified that the State Department of Education's document is intended to serve as a reference point for schools to develop their food allergy plans and suggested the task force clarify the intent and potential for those types of allergy plans improving the prevention safety, prevention and management of food allergies in school. He referred to ACES initiative as an example. He posed the question: what do we want to really promote across the state as parts of allergy plans that districts can adhere to and does not have a financial burden and that addresses disparities between districts.

Dr. Rosen commented that allergy management plans should already in place in school districts.

Mr. Corjulo pointed out that this is part of the reason why the task force was created. Schools are legislated to have food allergy management plans, but there is no data and does not believe the State Department of Education or Public Health has been charged to collect data or confirm that all the districts have food allergy plans. Furthermore, how standardized are these plans, without imposing that these plans be the same.

Ms. Spaulding introduced member Jessica Curran's proxy Patricia Donovan.

Ms. Donovan noted how Jessica and she helped Fairfield School District update their food allergy plan, which had not been updated since 2004 and did not reflect the latest legislation of 2010 or 2012. She stated that the subject is difficult for districts to understand because of the lack of know-how on the ground. While researching best practices they discovered the difficulty is the implementation of policy after school districts draft it due to the lack of education around food allergies. This is how this issue came to legislature.

Dr. Rosen asked how many school districts the task force will need to contact to see if they have a food allergy management plan.

Ms. Donovan responded that there are 169 school districts.

Ms. Donovan shared that regarding the data issue, that she contacted Dr. Michael Pistiner, and learned that he had established a data system. She continued that when she contacted the State Department of Education asking for data on epinephrine administration calls from schools she found it is mixed in with 911 emergency calls. She stated that if we can track epinephrine administration calls in schools we could figure out how effective our policies are and be able to tweak them.

Mr. Corjulo commented that the Association of School Nurses of CT has approved using Dr. Pistiner's tracking system, but it is not mandatory to use and perhaps this is something the task force can look into and possibly promote through this task force.

Ms. Spaulding brought up the idea of breaking into subcommittees to tackle the charges of the task force.

There was a discussion regarding the collection of food allergy management plans among Connecticut school districts began.

Ms. Donovan pointed out how some schools districts have replaced hand washing with hand sanitizer and that using hand sanitizers is ineffective. In addition, she mentioned the lack of addressing inclusion and social/emotional development of students with food allergies.

Mr. Corjulo concurred and gave an example of a child being excluded from participating in a pizza party.

Dr. Rosen emphasized the need for food allergy plans to be patient dependent and not standardized, as well as the importance of school nurses to sit down with parents and establish a health management plan.

Ms. Donovan, Mr. Corjulo and Dr. Rosen agreed on the idea of breaking up into subcommittees.

Members began to discuss the policy framework for school district food allergy management plans, avoiding prescriptive and an overly relaxed structure as well as oversight to ensure school districts are effectively implementing these plans.

Ms. Donovan remarked that when Ms. Curran and she were helping Fairfield school district develop its food allergy management plan, they discovered their school was on the 5 % line of the national average with 90% of those students being peanut and tree nut allergic, with quite a distribution for egg, dairy, and other things.

Ms. Corjulo pointed out that this example proves that the task force must be vigilant on what to include and exclude in policy framework for school district food allergy management plans.

Ms. Donovan added that the task force might want to look into incorporating development appropriateness into safety plans.

Dr. Rosen clarified that food allergy can become life-threatening even if it wasn't. He went on further to say that you can have an individual with a minor reaction who had a bad asthma day and historically never had the anaphylactic reaction, but got into trouble and the allergy became life threatening. He also advised the task force that they should use the correct terms and it was best to use food allergy as a general term rather than life-threatening food allergy because of the connotation life-threatening has – drop in blood pressure, anaphylactic reaction. In addition, when using life-threatening one dismisses individuals with the mild food allergy reaction.

Ms. Spaulding added that there are also children who have not yet been identified with food allergies in schools.

Mr. Corjulo pointed out that 25 % of first time reactants have anaphylactic reaction in school settings, which is the impetus for how ACES rationalizes not serving these common allergens across the board; in addition, these are the kids that have historically died from anaphylaxis. He added that Connecticut went from being at the bottom of having access to epinephrine to now the top of the list. He continued that the state has legislated that every school must be stocked with epinephrine and have someone trained to administer it. He believes this addressed Dr. Rosen's comment of food allergies becoming life threatening as schools now have a mechanism to address it.

Ms. Spaulding reemphasized that this was the charge of the task force to make sure it is consisted followed and implemented across Connecticut.

Mr. Corjulo added the importance of accountability and authority over elements, like the administration of epinephrine, related to the effectiveness of a uniform food allergy management plan.

Ms. Spaulding agreed and suggested this be something the task force looks into during its term.

Dr. Rosen asked if there should be a subcommittee to look at the food allergy management plan guidelines.

Ms. Spaulding agreed it should be one of the subcommittees.

Dr. Rosen raised a question about the guidelines banning school cafeterias from serving peanuts and nuts.

Mr. Corjulo read page 17, top paragraph of the guideline, in the middle it says school districts need to consider how to develop a plan that over time will best meet the needs of all students and prepare them for self-management and advocacy as they transition beyond pre-K to grade 12, it goes on to say that school options may include establishing free food allergen zones. He summarized that he believed the intent of the guidelines was to give autonomy to the school districts to carry out what they believed would best meet the needs of their students. He stated that he believed the task force is meeting because the guidelines need a little more teeth.

Ms. Donovan added that there isn't enough data to measure the effectiveness of the guidelines and emphasized the need for data to not be too prescriptive with options.

Mr. Urso asked if it was the task force's charge to also look at what is happening outside the jurisdiction of school authority and outside of school hours, such as out sourced nursing staff, bus drivers, coaches and athletic games.

Ms. Donovan stated that she completely agreed in looking into such matters since the school is sponsoring the events therefore responsible.

Mr. Urso suggested establishing a subcommittee to look into this area and offered his expertise to the subcommittee.

Ms. Owusu asked if the task force knows of school districts with policies in place that are doing well that they can recommend so that the task force does not reinvent the wheel.

Mr. Corjulo commented that it seems most school districts have taken appendix A from the guideline and converted that into their food allergy management plan. He suggested having a subcommittee review page 34 of the guidelines in terms of individual roles in the plan. He believed this is the meat and potatoes of the issues.

Ms. Spaulding agreed with the suggestion.

Ms. Embree Ku suggested using CAFE policy services along with policies implemented in districts, and possibly have a subcommittee look into these areas.

Mr. Corjulo agreed.

Ms. Donovan suggested adding to the list to look at National Association of School Boards because it also has some very good policy guidelines.

Ms. Embree Ku suggested also adding the nutrient/dietary guidelines given by Connecticut State Department of Education to School Districts.

Ms. Alston further clarified that the food nutrient guidelines for school districts, which the School Nutrient Program Department give, follow the United States Department of Agriculture guidelines. Also in that guideline it gives school districts and staff guidelines for food accommodations like food allergies.

Ms. Spaulding opened to discussion speaker recommendations.

Ms. Alston suggested a Food Service Director from a large school district.

Ms. Donovan suggested bringing in a psychologist to get an understanding of the psychological side of food allergies.

Dr. Rosen commented that the guidelines wouldn't require a lot of tweaking, but the implementation of the recommendation and oversight of the implementation in school systems will be the daunting task.

Mr. Corjulo commented that the purpose of the guideline is prevention.

Ms. Donovan agreed and added that there are modules that can help schools, their staff, and their students and are cost effective to have and make. She also suggested adding food allergies to health the curriculums, specifically high school level.

Mr. Corjulo directed the task force to home modules created by Dr. Pistiner and Dr. Lee.
<http://www.allergyhome.org/connecticut/>

Ms. Donovan suggested adding Dr. Pistiner's home modules to be reviewed by a subcommittee.

Ms. Spaulding agreed with the suggestion and mentioned adding Dr. Pistiner to their guest list to speak to the task force.

Ms. Embree Ku opened up the floor for suggested guest speakers.

Ms. Alston responded that John Frassinelli will be the best person help regarding the process of disseminating information to school districts.

Ms. Embree Ku asked if they have any data on incidents happening or feedback from the districts.

Ms. Altson replied that John Frassinelli may have information on that.

Mr. Corjulo responded that there is no required mechanism in place for school nurses to report the administration of epinephrine. He went on to say that legislation was proposed on the issue, but there was a fiscal note, so it did not pass.

Dr. Rosen added that in addition to having a plan, they have to know how to implement the plan.

Ms. Embree Ku asked the task force if anyone has an idea of how acquire more information on transportation implementation.

Dr. Rosen mentioned that in the past he looked into this area and realized it was a sticky area that needed more review of.

Mr. Urso suggested requesting information from bus companies, safety supervisor and owner of the bus company.

Ms. Spaulding commented that in her past research she found out that most bus companies' policies are national, so their policies are national. She posed the question can bus drivers maintain that no one is eating on that bus, the answer is no. She also mentioned Massachusetts' and Rhode Island's transportation policy with regards to food allergy.

Mr. Urso added another obstacle is of schools using different transportation companies.

Ms. Spaulding agreed.

Ms. Embree Ku recapped bringing guest speakers to talk to the task force. She opened the floor to the task force members to acquire data-driven data.

Ms. Donovan suggested asking school districts if they have someone in charge of medication administration after school.

Mr. Corjluo commented that the current epinephrine law applies only during school hours.

Ms. Embree Ku opened the discussion for subcommittee groups.

Ms. Owusu suggested merging items 4 and 5 on the agenda.

Ms. Embree Ku commented on sending out information of anti-bullying laws to task force members.

Task force members agreed on merging items 4 and 5.

Ms. Embree Ku turned meeting over to Ms. Spaulding to go over meeting schedule.

Ms. Donovan asked if meetings are open to public attendance and comment.

Ms. Spaulding answered yes, meetings are open to public, but not for public comment; however, in the future public comment can add to the agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.